

**Submission to OHCHR on Human Rights Resolution 50/9: Human Rights and Climate Change**  
 “Adverse Impact of Climate Change on the Full Realization of the Right to Food”  
 December 7, 2022

The following is a joint submission from **Climate Refugees** and **Alight**. The first two inputs are provided by Climate Refugees to questions 1 and 6 of the questionnaire based on research and climate displacement fieldwork conducted in Kenya, Somalia and Central America. Based on program work in the Horn of Africa and Pakistan, Alight is addressing questions 4 and 5 in the last two inputs.

**Please describe through concrete examples and stories how climate change is affecting the full realization of the right to adequate food in your country**

The Horn of Africa is experiencing an unprecedented drought, the worst to strike the region in 40 years. It is also experiencing the world’s worst food emergency.<sup>i</sup> The past years have seen torrential rains, record floods, repeat droughts, consecutive failed rainy seasons and two swathes of desert locusts that have devastated crops in the region.<sup>ii</sup> The present two-year drought has now exceeded the severity and duration<sup>iii</sup> of the 2016–2017 and 2011–2012 droughts. Nearly 40 million people are affected by dire food insecurity and near famine. Nine million livestock have died, destroying the livelihoods of the primary pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities, and further contributing to malnutrition in 5 million children. Food security trends are concerning in this region. In 2021, the WFP found weather conditions were the primary driver of hunger in eight African countries, and expect worse in future years. The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report warned, by 2030, 250 million people may experience high water stress in Africa.<sup>iv</sup>

We direct OHCHR to the **concrete examples and stories** of how climate change is affecting both food security and water security in the Horn of Africa in Climate Refugees’ [November 2022 submission](#) to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change.

**Kenya**

Drylands occupy 90% of Kenya<sup>v</sup>, and the impact of the drought on arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) has been acute<sup>vi</sup>. Agricultural activities comprise a major part of Kenya’s economy, contributing a third of its GDP and employing 40% of the population, including 70% of its rural population.<sup>vii</sup> Increasingly severe droughts as a result of climate change have a clear negative impact from an economic standpoint, with the livelihood of millions of Kenyans threatened. But drought periods also threaten the country’s ability to feed its people, especially in the case of small-scale and subsistence agriculture. Rural communities are particularly vulnerable, given how likely they are to be reliant upon the agricultural sector for income, and they may very well experience a compounded impact when drought strikes. If an area is experiencing high temperatures and a lack of rainfall, a rural household not only faces a lack of adequate income from growing, harvesting, and selling as part of the wider economy, but it may also be unable to grow enough food or catch enough fish to sustain the members of the household itself.

Historically, communities were often able to cope with droughts of moderate severity and short duration. But climate change has both increased the severity of frequency of droughts, which has constrained communities’ ability to cope<sup>viii</sup> and reduced the range of available choices for households when it comes to both income generation and subsistence growing, fishing, and pastoralism.

**Central America**

Climate Refugees addressed the adverse impacts of climate change in Central America countries in this [joint NGO report](#), where evidence suggests climate change impacts and climate variability have impacted agriculture and the livelihoods of millions of farmers. Recent drought in the Central America Dry Corridor, resulted in food insecurity and malnutrition rates, suggesting sustained climatic changes, contributing to migration from the region. Extreme climatic events like prolonged droughts, (recently [2014-2017](#)), a coffee rust [outbreak](#), hurricanes, (recently [Eta and Iota](#)), and tropical storms render social, economic, environmental and political vulnerability in the region, its people and, ultimately, the national economies of these countries.

Many here are subsistence farmers, where economic and social mobility have been hindered by historic exclusion, inequality of land tenure, and poverty, leading to the peoples' underdevelopment, while land and natural resources have made way for public and private investments in mega development projects and extractive industries in mining, agrobusiness, energy, tourism, and infrastructure. Many of these development projects, we're told - as much as 90 percent - are on Indigenous lands.

The Dry Corridor covers nearly 30 percent of the entirety of Central America, home also to the greatest population density where a number of Indigenous groups reside, and where rural poverty rates are higher than the national averages, and food insecurity has soared.

Several migrants we've spoken to have included sustained climate changes amongst the reasons for their displacement, and the resulting challenges when crop failures equal sustained losses and adaptation is hindered by ever smaller plots of land. Subsistence farming, social fractures and climate events, are documented in deep [food insecurity](#), where [WFP](#) and [FAO](#) say 1.4 million people are in urgent need of food assistance after crop loss due to rainfall and drought.

### Somalia

Somalia has experienced 30 climate-related shocks since 1990.<sup>ix</sup> Decades of political instability, conflict, insecurity, spiraling food prices and pasture, grazing land and crop devastation by billions of desert locusts in 2020 have only heightened food insecurity and livelihood loss for millions of agro-pastoralists in the country. Over one million people in Somalia have now been displaced<sup>x</sup> by drought effects, both internally and across borders to Yemen, Ethiopia, Kenya and beyond. Humanitarian agencies are warning of strained resources, given that over the course of just two months, almost 60,000 Somalis fled climate change conditions to Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp.<sup>xi</sup> Displacement in Somalia continues to be complex and multi-faceted, with more Somalis disclosing climate change as their primary driver of displacement.<sup>xii</sup> In 2020, over 75% of new displacements were as a result of climate change, as millions flee food insecurity.<sup>xiii</sup> In the semi-autonomous region of Somaliland, the National Disaster Preparedness and Food Reserve Authority (NADFOR) told us another 810,000 people are now internally displaced, purely due to drought-related hunger.<sup>xiv</sup> As one expert put it, "*we don't have conflict in Somaliland, only climate change.*"

**Please include examples and promising practices and challenges that highlight international and multilateral cooperation and approaches that promote the full realization of the right to food.**

The knock-on effects of climate-related disasters have exposed a well-known truth: our existing strained humanitarian system is not a lasting solution to handle multiple, repeating disasters. Shifting from a short-term humanitarian approach to a longer-term development-peace nexus approach is vital to realize the right to food in climate vulnerable regions. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is adopting such approaches through cooperation between Member States and free movement protocols,

especially in times of drought and food insecurity, that ensures the movement of people across borders in temporary and circular migration patterns<sup>xv</sup>. The Kampala Convention<sup>xvi</sup> on the protection of internally displaced persons in Africa and the recent Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change<sup>xvii</sup> serve as examples of effective regional cooperation mechanisms in the face of growing climate threats. Cooperative initiatives<sup>xviii</sup> to protect and promote food security amongst Member states, and partnership between [IGAD and FAO](#) are just some of the promising practices in this region that highlight positive regional cooperation that promote the right to food.

Migrants and displaced persons interviewed told us food insecurity in their countries had forced them to migrate to neighboring IGAD countries as a means of adaptation, and they had successfully received a right of admission to stay and pathways to citizenship in IGAD countries. Many pastoral communities told us about their temporary and permanent movement from Kenya to the Ugandan highlands, where water and grazing land are more available, noting that historic circular movements were becoming increasingly permanent due to sustained climate change impacts. However, just as many spoke of limitations that prevent them from moving due to lack of water and food to make the 45 kilometer 10-day journey on foot to the border. Others suffer from lack of mobility amongst the elderly and disabled, while others simply were reticent to leave their homes, citing that migration was no longer a temporary measure. Additionally, during times of heightened security or perceived weapons proliferation, border closures or migrant entry denials are utilized.

All of these communities are moving within and across borders as a coping mechanism against climate change impacts. As they move, however, many are coming into contact with other pastoralist groups, setting off conflicts arising from natural resource sharing, water scarcity, land access and ownership. The African Union (AU) and IGAD are responding with early warning systems on climate-related security risks. The AU's policy response includes 16 frameworks to address a myriad of concerns, including food security across the continent<sup>xix</sup>, while IGAD is focused on resolving pastoralist conflicts that arise from cross-border movements.<sup>xx</sup>

Indigenous people are adversely impacted due to a history of marginalization and underdevelopment in their regions. For example, the Nilotic Turkana people, native to the semi-arid region of Turkana county in northwestern Kenya, are hard hit by climate change. The Turkana are Indigenous to this region, with significant experience in dealing with periods of rain and dry spells, but all the people Climate Refugees spoke to say they have never experienced nor heard of a dry period like this that is deeply impacting their food security.

The Horn of Africa situation underscores the urgent need for climate adaptation.<sup>xxi</sup> Adopting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, developed, high-emitting countries agreed in 2009 to provide \$100 billion in annual climate adaptation funding to help developing countries adapt to climate change. However, that funding has not fully materialized, and countries like Kenya have a much more limited ability to adapt to and combat the negative impacts of drought (namely food insecurity) than wealthy countries, but continue to face an international system in which responsibility-sharing is unfair and lopsided. As a result, despite being lauded for its [climate plan](#) and steps taken to address the climate crisis, it continues to face severe and worsening impacts from drought events (among others).

**Please describe any mechanisms and tools that are in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full realization of the right to food.**

The tools in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change that Alight uses the most are our on-the-ground connections to our customers. Of course, weather modeling and larger trends are important. However, we believe that by listening to affected communities, the effects of climate change can be caught early and food insecurity can be identified before more serious indicators appear (price spirals, selling of belongings, skipping meals, etc.) These stories, assessments, and ideas from impacted communities help us better understand and measure the impacts of climate change.

One way we gather this information is through our subsidiary program, Kuja Kuja, which collects, analyzes, and helps their partners to take action on real time customer feedback. By using questionnaires and easy to use dashboards, the information they collect first hand informs Alight of needs, changes in real time, and how program responses can be improved. These stories, assessments, and ideas from impacted communities help Alight better understand and measure the impacts of climate change.

Local partners are invaluable resources, and as trusted part of their communities identify needs and take action. Alight works with the Catholic Sisters in South Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Central America, and elsewhere to amplify efforts to relieve hunger and build resilience in the communities they support.

**Please identify and share examples of promising practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the full realization of the right to food in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.**

*Promising practices for addressing food security in the context of climate change:*

The increasing challenges in food insecurity call for innovative solutions and fresh perspectives on humanitarian aid and development. Human-Centered Design is at the heart of Alight’s work, and we have seen the positive difference co-creation and localization of aid make in the lives of affected communities.

Co-creation is a key part of the Human-Centered Design process. It brings together a diverse set of voices—including local communities—to design new things and new ways of doing things or to improve on existing processes. These communities know best how their lives and livelihoods have been altered by climate change. In the places Alight works, our customers have seen their fields dry up and decrease food production, they have felt the insecurity of changing water resources, or have had their homes washed away in floods. Our work in acutely climate-affected places like the Horn of Africa and Pakistan has laid bare how devastating these changes are and will continue to be.

We also know from our engagement with communities that women and youth make for amazing, visionary partners. These marginalized groups have much to gain in addressing the effects of climate change and food insecurity as it affects them disproportionately. Including these groups when considering best practices to combat food insecurity is imperative.

Another promising area is the progress made in adaptation. While the mitigation of greenhouse gasses should and will be an aspiration, the devastating effects of climate change are already here. In many cases, we already know the solutions to either mitigate or solve these problems caused by climate shocks. It then becomes a matter of smart development in partnership with affected communities and scale. Smart water solutions – *that help communities weather drought and build verdant food systems* – do exist. But they require planning and commitment, especially in times when water is bountiful. Alight’s roofed water catchment system helps communities harvest water all year. These catchments are smart water solutions that could provide a reliable water supply for generations. The international community must scale

solutions like this to meet the needs of communities where they are, to help them adapt to climate change *before* they face the desperate choice of having to leave their homes for survival.

The recognition of Loss and Damage at COP27 is also a promising endeavor toward the full realization of the right to food. For some communities, mitigation and adaptation have come too late. Often these communities are found in places that have contributed the least to climate change. It is encouraging that there is commitment to fund communities facing irreversible loss, but this funding must now materialize. As these funds come to fruition, they could aid in improving food security by providing drought-resistant seed, improved and sustainable irrigation systems, modern farm machinery where appropriate, and other aids in food cultivation.

Further still, the Biden administration in the United States is dedicated to the cause of ameliorating the effects of climate change. The President's [Emergency Plan for adaptation and Resilience](#) (PREPARE) was first launched at COP26. Its goal is to aid more than half a billion people in developing countries in climate adaptation and resiliency. The plan focuses on early warning systems, mainstreaming adaptation measures, and unlocking climate finance. The [Inflation Reduction Act](#) championed by the Biden administration sets the United States on a path to reduce pollution, improve clean transit, make clean energy more assessable, and strengthen resilience to climate change.

*Challenges of realizing food security in the context of climate change:*

While Alight is encouraged by these promising steps toward the full realization of the right to food, there remain complicated realities. Many places experiencing the acute effects of climate change are also some of the most vulnerable and fragile contexts in the world, with some experiencing protracted conflict. Taking the Horn of Africa as an example, low human development and conflict contribute to low food production. Poor governance and failure at the state level contribute to food insecurity in myriad ways, including inadequate land management and the inability to provide safety nets.

Also contributing to the challenges of food insecurity is the fact that climate change acts as a vulnerability multiplier. Climate is often discussed as a threat multiplier, as it exacerbates already existing points of pressure and instability in societies. However, it has particularly pernicious effects on the most vulnerable segments of society. Those who already live without safety nets—those experiencing poverty, subsistence farmers, herders, marginalized groups, and others—feel the effects of climate shocks in full force. When these shocks happen, they often lack the means to relocate, travel, or start over. Additionally, in vulnerable populations, there are often fewer livelihood choices. This means that when traditional means of income fail, there are limited ways to adapt to the new realities of climate change. In Pakistan, climate change was a contributing factor to massive floods in 2022, but the effects were compounded by poor drainage systems and the fact that poorer people were living in areas prone to flooding.

Another major challenge is the ever-present need for funding to address these growing needs around food security caused by climate change. According to the World Food Program, an estimated 49 million people in 49 countries are on the brink of famine.<sup>xxii</sup> Climate change has contributed to this rise in insecurity, but COVID-19, Russia's war in Ukraine, and supply-chain issues are also contributing factors. Due to this insecurity, millions will need to migrate to more sustainable areas. The humanitarian aid sector is not prepared nor was it designed to take on crises of this magnitude. It will take the whole of the international community coming together in innovative and forward-thinking ways, guided by human-centered design, to meet these challenges.

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- <sup>i</sup> Giving Countries in Conflict Their Fair Share of Climate Finance. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/fair-share-of-climate-finance>
- <sup>ii</sup> New Generation of Desert Locusts Breeding in Horn of Africa. 28 October 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-28/new-generation-of-desert-locusts-breeding-in-horn-of-africa#xi4y7vzkg>
- <sup>iii</sup> Horn of Africa Drought: Regional Humanitarian Overview & Call to Action. 21 September 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/horn-of-africa-drought-regional-humanitarian-overview-call-action-revised-21-september-2022>
- <sup>iv</sup> Matt Raulerson, "Latest IPCC Report Projects Drought Will Displace 700 Million in Africa," Climate Refugees, 3 March 2022, <https://www.climate-refugees.org/spotlight/2022/3/3/ipcc-africa>
- <sup>v</sup> Drylands, Development, Pastoralism and Biodiversity Conservation in East Africa. ASARECA. [https://www.asareca.org/sites/default/files/publications/policy\\_brief\\_drylands\\_development\\_pastoralism\\_and\\_biodiversity\\_conservation\\_in\\_east\\_pb1.pdf](https://www.asareca.org/sites/default/files/publications/policy_brief_drylands_development_pastoralism_and_biodiversity_conservation_in_east_pb1.pdf)
- <sup>vi</sup> "Desperate for Water, Communities in Kenya's Rural Areas Forced to Move," IOM, 20 March 2022, <https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/stories/desperate-water-communities-kenyas-rural-areas-forced-move>
- <sup>vii</sup> "Economic Growth and Trade," USAID, 4 October 2022, <https://www.usaid.gov/kenya/economic-growth-and-trade>
- <sup>viii</sup> Drought Situation in Kenya ASAL Areas Now at Crisis Level 10 October 2022. <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/drought-situation-kenya-asal-areas-now-crisis-level>
- <sup>ix</sup> Worsening Drought Affects 2.3 Million People in Somalia. 19 November 2021 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1106222>
- <sup>x</sup> "One Million Displaced by Drought in Somalia," UNHCR and NRC. 11 August 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2022/8/62f4c3894/million-people-displaced-drought-somalia.html>
- <sup>xi</sup> "Humanitarian Needs Mount as Almost 60,000 Refugees From Somalia Arrive in Dadaab Refugee Camp Due to Impact of Climate Change, Warns IRC." Reliefweb, 8 November 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/humanitarian-needs-mount-almost-60000-refugees-somalia-arrive-dadaab-camp-due-impact-climate-change-warns-irc>
- <sup>xii</sup> "Climate Change Driving Displacement as Somalia Faces Famine: An Interview with the UN's Christophe Hodder," Climate Refugees, 8 June 2022. <https://www.climate-refugees.org/perspectives/2022/6/8/somalia>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xiv</sup> Climate Refugees interview with Shomake Abdi Musse, Director of Planning and Research, NADFOR, Hargeisa, Somaliland, 24 October 2022.
- <sup>xv</sup> Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in the IGAD Region, 26 February 2020, <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1411/files/event/file/Final%20IGAD%20PROTOCOL%20ENDORSED%20BY%20IGAD%20Ambassadors%20and%20Ministers%20of%20Interior%20and%20Labour%20Khartoum%2026%20Feb%202020.pdf>
- <sup>xvi</sup> African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/about-us/background/4ae9bede9/african-union-convention-protection-assistance-internally-displaced-persons.html>
- <sup>xvii</sup> Kampala Ministerial Declaration, 29 July 2022, [https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1411/files/documents/Kampala%20Ministerial%20Declaration%20on%20MECC\\_English%20signed.pdf](https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1411/files/documents/Kampala%20Ministerial%20Declaration%20on%20MECC_English%20signed.pdf)
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- <sup>xix</sup> Climate Related Security Risks and the African Union. May 2020. [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/pb\\_2005\\_au\\_climate.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/pb_2005_au_climate.pdf)
- <sup>xx</sup> Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism. IGAD. <http://www.igadregion.org/cewarn/>
- <sup>xxi</sup> Giving Countries in Conflict Their Fair Share of Climate Finance. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/fair-share-of-climate-finance>
- <sup>xxii</sup> "A Global Food Crisis," World Food Programme, <https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis>